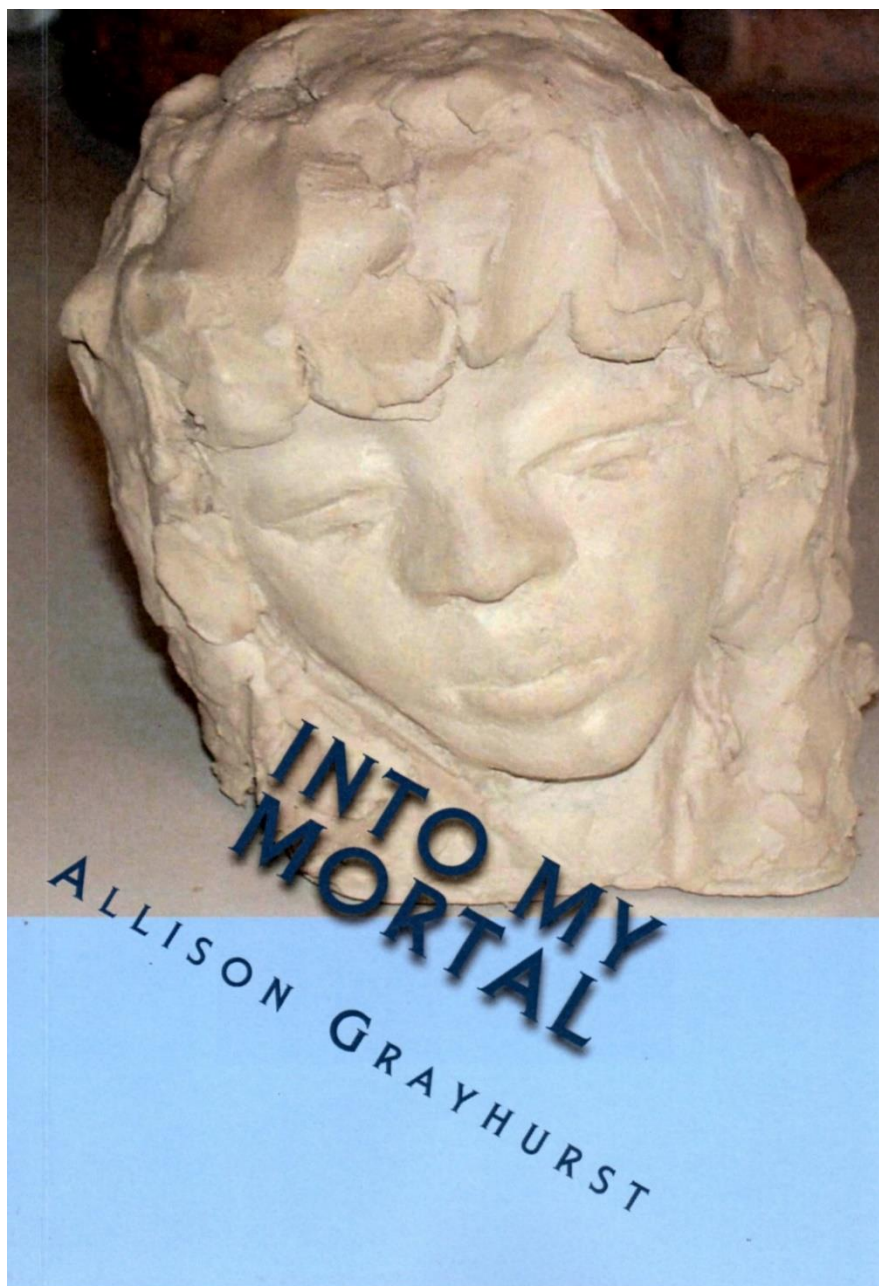




INTO MY MORTAL

ALLISON GRAYHURST

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Allison Grayhurst

Edge Unlimited Publishing

Into My Mortal

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First addition

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New Era

From the start I believed
in never bending, but now I am a weather-vane,
guided by singing.

Now, in movement I grow like a wild weed -
a glutton of untouched terrain.

I have put on the iron mask,
burned my skin for the battles
of another. That shore is sinking
and my globe has altered its axle.

I put away my grown-up philosophy
to live by impulse and the pity of God.

The task is done, the ice is swallowed.
It is time to love the gargoyles and create
a new form of beauty.

Vacant Underground

No sales clerk
or hand to count coins.
A wish is like a wave that breathes,
hunting with the tide.
The sand is grasped but never held -
its form lost again in the unforgiving sea.
I had a wish, jealous and absolute.
It took my days like a nunnery and
discarded all urban vice.
It was my only footwear, my mornings
of praise and exalted sighs.
It caused my bones to snap like a dry crust of bread
and left my innards excavated, desperate for anything else.
This wish has never died, though for a decade it has been
beaten down. It walks beside me, deformed and chained.
I own it and it owns me, as we walk, born as one.

SomeOne New

Change is crouching
on my back deck,
behind the pillars
and rotted wood.

Change is tossing in my womb
and giving me a bell to ring.

Like someone new to sing to,
it nicks my forehead with its
broken rhythm. Like starlight
weaving under my skin, growing,
wanting my speed,

change is alive, but small as a rice grain
forming its heavenly head.

Welcome little hamlet of wonder,
welcome from the blue breath of God.

Come see us all and turn this home
of three kindred souls into four.

I Do Not Try To Understand

**Wear the wind, my flesh is round
but so easy to cut.
By the glow of a fallen tribe
someone touched my name
and sent me drifting.
From the child I learn of laughter
in the morning. Because
there is a secret growing within
though the weight has not yet started,
I count myself internal and need even less
from the world.
Praise the dark and the insect's back.
Make room for the newborn to rise.
Look, the doves are drenched in rain.**

Under My Skin

In this month
slumbering onward,
I feel your kick
saying that 'yes' a change is
coming - one so strong it will
open many doors along side it.
I press my hand against my
belly and wish for you a healthy world
of open spaces and unwavering affection.
I have no fear of the boy you will be.
I have darkness in me I cannot shake,
but that has no hold -
for it has always been love
that has carried me along.

Corner of a Dream

The fixed rule
in the corner of a dream
is lost in the soils and slabs
of those drowned by duty
and the pure cheer of society's whim.
I comb my hair. I journey through
a keyhole to make my claim.
A tower, a reed, like a broken curb -
God is easily tripped over.
Once I was lonely. Now this sinking feeling
is full of folly, though it still vaults
me in its swampy temper.
I talk to the dark. It has my story . . .

Only to swim and shower the garden
with the juice of my burning veins.

In The Name

With the northern tide he came
like a bride to her first wedded kiss.
Born without enemies or pride,
he drank the flame of God. Soon
he was a legend and all the world
would praise his name like an unfriendly
habit. Some knew his word like
bread, like a babe that needed constant
tending. Some would hear and then in years, turn
back to join the assembly of conflicting voices,
pulling behind them the weighted shadows of so many
engulfing concerns.

I am one who heard and lost, who felt my blood
renewed and then ingested the virus of adulthood
and all its houses made of paper.

I lived with a rotted passion, with a sterile faith
and a heart so tight and annoyed.
This is a remembrance of the thirst
he cured.

I am saved again by the shrilling cut of his love
and by the tender stream of his great pity.

New Tree in the Garden

I know she sees
her meadow broken by
thundering changes sinking
through the floor.
I know her home feels cut
by a tide unlocking an invasive unknown.
But still the horn must blow
and our love can be her temple and overcoat.
We would never cross her off to cheer
a new seed or count her a little underscore
while welcoming the infant sound.
With love not lead by guilt
and a grace that releases all habitual chains,
we will burn with family-joy
humming strong and stronger
when the walls fall down, making space
to hold one more.

Hard Pressed

The wave drifts in like a snake
through this open season. Dreamlines
are lost in the dirty laundry and I am
learning to reshape and bend.

One brick, two bricks, three, placed
on the outer wall. There is no protection - only faith
and the long ride home.

Interlude

Upon the window's sill
I saw a ghost walking
of a young woman veiled in grief
with sunset hair and morose eyes -
her death drifted to me like
a scent. I called to her, with
overflowing sympathy, but the grave
was now her bed and the enemy-world
was her heart's betrayal. I saw her sit
then look to the sky, her tormented forehead
glistening as the rain did on the roof's old shingles.
She spoke three names softly, and over and over their
sound ripped my skull as if the sun itself had entered
to burn all hard-held secrets out.
I loved her like someone I had long known and understood,
watching her, hardly visible
as the rain pushed on.

Only One

What speaks of tenderness in the dead-blue
aftermath of human-induced horror?

When husband and wife are at odds,
seeing only the diseased boil of slaughter
then non-existence, when the pregnant woman
finds no seat in the midst of a
crowded day?

What speaks of holding on when the world is pale
with grief and parents mock their children's love
with coldness and condescension?

What eye can see divine magnificence before
its doom? Or find greatness in what
society has ignored or condemned?

On the rafters a single flower is born.

I look to that single flower, like I look to spending
the afternoon with the ones who have endeared,
like the pulse and turn of my infant within
or a brief morning solitude -
open for interpretation.

Six Months Pregnant

Thud, thud
my body burns
to stretch and hold your
growing form.
Kick and twist, you within
having no shadow, only
the liquid darkness that is your
right, your atmosphere of rich
undeniable movement and depth.
Soon you will breathe a new force
into this family, and we three will
sing at your bedside -
little boy, welcome, grower
of dreams.

For Life

**Though I am laden with the weight
of preparation and the physical pull
of this marveling change, I feel
your kindness like cool weather
cradle me within this cloud.**

**I am grateful for you and your
untiring compassion - the way we breathe
as one and plant our tears in the same dark
alley. Though it is hard for me to
harvest my love, the wood burns bright
beneath my exhausted frame.**

**I look at you and know I am not lost
from the blue skies of glory.**

**I know your love is tremendous - you are the one
who keeps me standing, drills for me a passage
out of this thorny undertow and shows me
the beauty of today, here
in my hands.**

Kind Escape

Once, a child, under
the spring's thriving sun,
lead by the glory of intricate imagination,
shadowed only by other children's push and talk.
The way was clear, the valley below was soaked
with debris. I never touched
the briars of age as the birds carved
out my language. It was long ago
but I have not left those unreal adventures,
only now with adult-mind and adult-longing
they still ease my dread. When the cathedral
is closed and the enemy has entered my blood,
I slide into their colourful weather
and wait for the day to be renewed.

Pulled from the Lifeless Waters

**I see the eyes that blow the day
from the dark throat.
I feel the voice of unhindered love
wash over my skin like fresh butter.
I hear the world calling with its drug dull
blurbs and I fade like colour in the sun,
exposed at my roots to the drain of muted sorrow.
Then I wake to the good journey
and the ruthless tearing away of burdening stuff
to touch a purity that pains like
a small girl's smile or the death of someone near.
It is new again, has left me to stand on my own again
and take the challenge to my pores,
with forgiveness everlasting and the terror
of knowing so great, so generous a love.**

Hard As Cain

Against the down and heron white
the earth lifts up its collection plate.
Rivers and forests are overflowing with
amputees - a million voices nibbling away the sky.
Sour death against the dried thistles
and clouds are heavy with death's pungent odour.
You draw the iron, you draw the fist
until at last you too will weep for the birds upon
the hill.

Everything's making too brutal a sense
as the yellow lawns are sprinkled.
You cannot give in to the ruling sun nor to the misfits
and courageous. Orphaned cubs and kids blank
with disease, ruined by the sanctity of your pocket.

Heaven is in a song. You strike a match
and burn all instruments with a shrug and a wave
of your formidable hand.

One Little Heart

One little heart
graced with purity.
Yellow hair and happy eyes
and all the dreams of a child's mind
like the shape of a butterfly in the drain,
or elephants in mushroom soup.

One little girl
dancing to sunshine
making eccentric faces
and laughing outloud.

One little child
painting pictures with her hands,
crying hard for babyhood
and spilling her fears on the ground.

One little heart
unknowing of all the gifts she gives,
of how much love she allows to live
and change this place called home.

Looking At Pictures

No darkness falls on the wasted hour,
only the drip drip drip of the faucet
and images of more enriching days.
The sky tells all
and I fear the thinning of my bones
and toenails too hard to cut.
I fear this weakness in my lungs
like a subtle beast devouring the best
of all I can give.
I see the yellow-haired children
playing in the sand and know my
fortune is sealed with love.
But still the walls are wet
with spilled coffee
as I think of the dead, and everyday I feel
a feverish sorrow overtaking
their watching eyes.

Storm

Quickly shadows come
on the window sill and over the
lilac tree.
Soon it is the song of the wind chimes
as birds fly low.
Crows talk and walk across the
vacant road. Flowers
get ready to lose their colour as petals
depart as butterflies would from their stems. The head
of a child is peering around some drapes while grownups
bring candles from the basement.
City cats curl under cars and bumblebees are still.
There is a sharp curve of the sky and
a streak of shocking white
like a line across a blank chalkboard.
Doors and screens are closed, as pigeons and squirrels
cover their nests, blind to all but the pressing
now.

Listening to the Talk

By the window, opening eyes
to the rival of dreams and
midnight in the nerves
like shell-shocked mothers
nursing infants.

So much was lovely before
knowing the meaning of money
and the blazing rain clouds of responsibility.
We ate our food and let our coffee last.
To bed with no mercy or fun in the eyes
but slashing the ball held as a child and
talking of baking, homesteads and depression.

There are dogs left in yards at 30 below
and children hearing grownups complaining
about their spouses and the burden of having children.
These are the ways shadows are born,
clinging like squid to the heel of life.

Pure and Plastic

The radius of a lifetime,
locking and unlocking the patterned weave
is but felt rubbed against
a jagged rock, torn at the slightest speed.
The flesh, the shell, the fruit's hard peel
some never go beyond. But the pathway
to the sea is long and duty is like
a safety-net dream that breaks the days down.
Magic is formed in the hands of a child
where shame is unknown as crime.
A simple way to nerve the eyes
and charge the stars with song.
What is missing? The water? The mansion? The sand?
Hand in hand we jump in time
and find our sanity
combing the shores of volatile
love.

Born

Once fireflies
devoured my hair
and my rosebush awoke
to the parable of the diseased snail.
Then one afternoon, when sleep
was my steady horse, my curtains
were lifted by the waters of God, and I sang
in the light - my name altered forevermore.
I remember weeping the evil from my pores, then gaining
the peace no guilt could void.
I remember how I tore off the leather jacket that I wore
to protect me from true expression.
There was a church across the road I would watch
as its bricks grew gravely and old. I would
pray for baby birds and animals, learning
to be free with this new found love.
The seasons climbed, and from a beautiful joining,
a child was born.
From that child, an era of music and warm windows.
Once the hunger ceased and the inviting horror
dried up like a fallen leaf -
life became for me and my love like a paper airplane held
in the hands of that wondrous child.

How Lucky I Am

So now she is three
and like a lake that has always been there,
soothing me, feeding me with wonder,
she grows, continuing.

In ten years it will be a different
language we share, but always
the same connecting laughter and the feeling
of being buried in velvety flour
by her gentle ways that move my ravaged heart
into peace.

In twenty, we will drink coffee, sharing
the same window. She will teach me, and I will be
her secret underground where she can nestle from
the revolving world.

In thirty, I will be old and she will be settled
into the source of her strength and individuality.
We will love each other the same as today,
when love is like the very air that rocks
so sweetly between us.

In Doubt

Under the guise
of do or die
the heart's mystery is born.
And then accepted
as an afterthought
when pain and struggle are foregone.
Because faith came like it did
from the tape recorder and other
underrated things, I could never speak
in whole of the dreams that drove me to love
nor appease the breath of death on
my clothes.
I could never will the tomato to ripen
or quench my thirst with social talk.
The nail is in the wood and still I wonder
why I am, on my own
on the world's platform
- a gift
 to no one.

Hard Time Singing

The ground that grows
the wasteful blight and
estranges the kiss and hiss of wildlife
is in me like a slaughtered tribe
that has no face.

I am in the nightmare cloud, wrapped
in tar and rotted wood. I hide
beneath the blanket, undone.

Sickness has walked around me, mile
around mile, and names me this stone chiseled
in two. It is the beginning, but it is midnight
and I am marked to be unmoved.

Hood

Circle the dollar,
a plant is shining
in streams from the sun.
I came from the darkness,
fierce, yet frail like one
wounded by the touch of
something too beautiful.
In my hands a star was destroyed
like a minnow out of water
gasping in the harsh air.
Songs and stories are what I have.
The answers I once played with are perishing
and only the vision remains.
I think this is good, though it feels as though I failed
my sounding fire and wetlogged my faith.
What was shadow is now solid, and the solid has
thinned to a smoky stream.

Out From Under

Simple beginnings,
a tear finally released -
a gleam, gentle as a dying flame.
Breaking slowly the crust of
dull months, the muddied fury
of being carried by the tide
and never holding the promised chalice.
A shape, a shade never seen
rising like the shadow of a walking giant
over my rooftop, down the eavestroughs
into my empty bowl.
Moonlight is slow. A body stretches
and pulses with new song.
Rosebuds are stirring from winter's slumber.
By and by the days
are moving forward -
a drop falling through.

No Direction

I smelled the afterglow
of these tricky toys
that bent the branches low
and drove the dreams from my eyes.
I saw you sitting, curled up in pain
and singing low of things that had no name.
I know the answer's blank as a January sky
and the lights that flicker
from door to door are not for me to understand.
I felt a paleness in my hands -
my fingers were worms, struggling out from
the hardened earth. Being alone is like a window
looking out. And guilt is good as the first step
then stops you from taking anymore. I am a rider on
a rocking horse. I caressed the edge too many times.
The curtain is open but nothing new walks by: Love,
love, it has to keep on . . .

I Know That

I know that faith
ebbs and flows, sometimes
larger, then hardly there
at all.

I know my faith
is often all I own,
though barely visible,
crushed under
the world's forearm.

I know to sing and that singing
can be freedom no matter
the crack and heel.

I know to love
for love is what remains
when nothing else renews.

I know to pray like breathing.

I know there is forgiveness
for what I fail to do,
and mercy is there for me to receive
like water.

Until The Ladder Shows

You answer me,
not with an antidote
but by putting a pillow under
the dragging day.
You answer me,
not speaking of summer
but of sustaining.
Any onlooker could see
my shrinking scenery
but never know
the way you showed me a pebble-stone path
over the high hills and muddy terrain.
You answer me with minimal deliverance,
delicately stepping through this grief-inducing wilderness,
tree-like, moon-like, zen-like
you slide under my veil to add a little colour.
You answer with candle light, not gold,
but answering. And I accept with grateful sighs
this balcony to stand on
while fire consumes each corner of my fallen rooms.

New House

**Ready now to open the vault
and chase my vanity out with the tide.
Ready to enter the submerged stages
of colossal change and streams
of primal glory wrapped
like thread around the pulse of God.
Ready to believe in mercy and in
warmth in the dead winter night.
Under my toes the sensation grows
that something is coming to change the
structure of my roof and allow more room
to rest.
Ready to hold the encroaching massacre aloof,
to paint my name on the wall and pile
all my expectations
at the foot of this entrance door.**

Tribe

Upon these days I spot
some children, hair like
silken straw under a daisy sun.
Three so in love with the wild bush
and humorous song and with each other -
with strong affection they spend their
mornings in exalted play.
Arm around arm, the oldest only five,
they know friendship that separates the lucky
from the hoards of thirsty travelers, they know
the embrace of childhood connection unmarred
by fractured homes.
Two joined by blood, one by fate, each
by the unseen link of tender recognition.
I watch their actions of natural glory
and feel their laughter like swallows circling
above their small heads.

Flies

By dawn the flies
released their shape into
the soothing wind and what
came back was the weary pulse
of dying wings grafted to the day.
What world was this inside their
dark heads that honoured the
photograph over the experience,
that held up frivolous wealth like
a deserved trophy?

What faith was plucked with the flowers
as all their little tongues reached out to pocket
the short-term scent?

The flies live in their high castles like undergrounds
enjoying only the drive and privileged complaints.
They call themselves the philanthropists and
the even-tempered elite.

But I see them in the honey jar
and count them as already gone.

Still

You and I are a terracotta river
encasing the unmanageable rock.
We drink from the cyclone fire
and fill our ears with the sounds of harps
and nocturnal rejoicing.
When I am touched and my head
is under the feather then time is
fossilized and my body is the voice
that drives me down the curve,
wide enough for an astounding fulfillment.
When I touch the core of your bones
and join the urgency of your kisses
with my own, then we are lured
from our daily plots and cast-out dreams,
until flooded and found by the golden synergy
of our married tongue.

Every Height I Fall

Must I be dark as the
vacant church at
night where many have
pleaded and died - bodies
in heavy caskets, silenced forevermore?
Must I be there, against the storm-cloud,
frightening the pretty blue-jay and the boy
in his rocking chair?
Must it always be the crushed beetle, the Earth
sick from human greed and the spinal joint maimed
from not enough love?
Up and down the pillar of eroded dreams
the years are thread strings lit afire by bickering
and cracked homes.
Must the TV be always turned on
and the soft features of grace
be trampled on in every
perfect garden?

Legacy

If you see the trail
of eels slide down
the whispering waves
and touch the history
of great dreams and
rampant madness,
then it happens when
you're young, when love
is a sealed coat, when hope
feels like a babe alone on a rooftop
and possibilities are dry and grey and faraway.
If you are traveling
the prison cell pages and snacking on the crumbs
from the epileptic's bed,
it happens before twilight,
before "home" is a word to count on.
And when you meet the antlers at eye level
and consume the rich, medicinal cherry,
it never stands on the other side
but remains like a new organ
there for always redefining
the workings of your head.

Serpent in my Shoe

There it is -
inane, insane instinct
in the bedrooms of
the unknowingly damned.
I rise like a rose
into bloom then lose all
my petals to the storm.
Waves and lions under the
sink, and the deepest dream I ever
dreamt was alone with the motions
of darker worlds.
I live with my drink and the smell
of too many ghosts warming themselves
over my vent.
I run with the wheelbarrow, my possessions
piled like dead sparrows.
Talking through the window, I hear
them talking about the petty thing that keeps
days turning and leaves no one free enough
to walk the plank.
I stand outside for a moment
and plunge all I know like a stake
into dry ground.

On this Dock

I hear the white steed
and the fish together
in dark obscurity.

I look at the body of water,
the children weeping to gain control.

I listen for the perishing wind
and declare to it a vigil
of telltale strength.

The journey here faces
the drive of instinct - to buckle
in and walk the safest hallway
or to carry the weight of failure
and still harbour a cry to the fox and a belief
in the many shapes of heaven.

The journey knows its evening
has come and all the beautiful clouds will drop
one by one from the sky.

Thinking Outside

Touching tails
and feather wings.
The apple trees bend
and sing of autumn's coming.
Starlings talk across backyards
and the high-pitched beetle
fills the wind like a calming drug.
In this place as summer fades
the quiet demands self-truth.
To pull from inside
a lacerated pride
and pile it on the dried grass.
Shadows mend the divided self
and love is an activity
to understand while counting birds
overhead.

I Long To Know

**I long to know the things
I never dreamt
beneath the shingles
and the watered-down dawn.
I long to know the name
of every insect that brushes
my cheek and the passions
of days long gone.
I sit beside the narrow rocks
and count each weathered stone.
I hope for love inside a stranger
and long to feel with fingers and soul
the connecting thread
that binds me to my enemy's door.**

Mustard Seed

I know your name,
but not your face,
octagon of tiny wonder
changing as I move through
my days, cloaked in the drain
and joy of your mystery.
I think I can feel you sometimes
sitting beside me, playing games
with your sister and laughing with
all the rest.
I think of someone fiercely beautiful
merging souls so easily with the family-us.
I touch my belly, remaining clothed
in this still-normal body.
I turn the lights out early, happy
when I think of the future.

This Vision In Hiding

**Unsteady, forever reviving
the withered skin on my back
and in the straddled stride of
this and every night, getting through.
Dead now, my old teacher, never famous,
never big on sentimentalized mercy,
but like the cloud and the maple trees
and even the animals that stared into your windows
you were like the cold air all around,
necessary and impersonal.
I said goodbye long ago. I do not visit your
headstone, but your being is beside me
and we remain important friends. I keep you here,
and one day, when my infants have grown, I will return
to your country and hear your voice humming
once more in my ears.**

Overpass

In the gravel hole
slumbering in cold fatigue
open, and open is tomorrow
never arriving. But pale and pasty
sickness in my mirror is all I see
when I look at my changing body, changing
again to form a great wonder.
Weak as a broken limb, my mind
is empty of inspiration and I am drifting with this seed
from day to day waiting for the sting to pass
and leave only a larger belly and joy
of what (in time)
will be.

I see the things

**we will never share,
like my children on your knee
or the bright fountain of this new life.
I see the changing years and sometimes
even forget to talk to you in my head
or shed the bitter tear.
But I still feel
a living warmth in the shades of your picture,
and I can hear your voice in the furnace call.
I can remember.**

I Sleep In The Rain

Lead by guilt - the fire seed
that begins with planting a new house.
Figures flay over the cold windows,
charming the fury of adjustment and opening wide
the shape of good wishes and engulfing beginnings.
The birth that contains death like the death
that brings rebirth - these are things rarely told
and when told, always told as though
taken for granted. The sermon, the singing
of all that comes hard to wake us
hard and beautiful.
Human in the void, in the faith that trees know
and a snail that moves across a busy road.
Love sometimes lacks its light, but is a stronger
love when shadowed because it excavates
below smiles and kind affection. Love that is
sharp - turning the outsides in
is in the air, sleeping but visible.

My Dreams Come

**I move and lose my frame
of ultimate freedom. Into
immobile dreams, and growing
fast are the fantastic blossoms of my mind.
As the hard core challenge
gets tucked in my socks
like a saved coin for tougher days,
I get weak with the demands on my shelf,
lazy in my intent though still I am
loved. Loved, but lost again and not at the
potential I am asked to uphold.**

**The sound rises in my ear. I put more
pillows under my head. I see the TV light
blind the brighter one beneath my bed.**

**I won't touch the crown or the things of great seed
until my excuses and ways to crawl under
are called to task and asked by me
to permanently, irrevocably
leave.**

Always There

The door's ajar
and my body can go there,
through the small space of light.
To make a landing for me
in the tumultuous rantings
of existence - held out
a moment, reminding me of how
to be alive with you there,
feeding my weakened gut, breathing
my breath, speaking of a love greater than
any love, and in doing so, forgiving me my
distractions and daily rituals of despair,
forgiving me for forgetting the magnitude
of your cloak that warms both in and out.
The gift again at my doorstep. The times
I do not look for you, then you find me.

I am not afraid. I am just a citizen - yours, even when
undirected, cynical and spent.

Blood Letting

How will I find myself again
when I am halfway from the ground,
among these walls of pictures
and uncertain echoes, with frames
on all sides of what I am suppose to be,
but never detailing the fury of my yesterdays?
Maybe there is no voice, only once
the sea, and then a wet blot of sand shaped by
the memory of pull and tug.
Maybe I steered myself under the rails,
and the field that was to be my toil is parched,
acres of hair-lipped unmanageable dreams.
How am I to find myself this way,
giving no fruit to my appetite, lucid
but slumbering through another decade,
so full of rudimentary contradictions?

One Grain

Bring me home
like the armadillo to its feast,
like the painter to her beholder
and the captain to his sea.
Love me long in this fearful underground
where the world I see is inside out
and the laws of the land have no place
for individualism or mercy.
Touch me on the shoulder,
let me know it is your answer,
and the sun will not be denied
nor will the seed die from bad weather.
Open my sight beyond this kaleidoscope
of contradiction, into the frame work of
one-light, one-way, one beautiful beginning.
Bless me, feed me, know me.
I will be what I can be,
higher than my mind can carry,
higher still with you by my side.

This Place, running

**Altered by the taking flood,
taking my wound to its midnight pressure,
excavating the dormant lie I've traced across
the pattern of my life.**

**This sinking red secret
that pins me to the world will go
if I trust there to be a doorway where a wall is standing.
If I release the vault of hopes mangled
then forsaken and bind myself to heaven,
then this poison will drain from my veins, the
insurmountable rock will be my waterslide
and the crack on my shore will bring forth a
different land of glorious senses.**

**I dig. The lid has shifted. The dry pond is moistening,
soon to be a place of movement.**

**The world is what it is, never to know
the waking heart of mercy.**

**But we are not thieves, nor are we to be the
minstrels of poverty, torn apart in the oceans,
clouded by the shows of unGodly charity
and well rehearsed praise.**

**We are to be the house, sacred to enter -
the winternight's window left ajar.**

Under

The wave that corroded my
belly came and went for days without
reprise, and then nothing
until summer. I felt the sharp daunting ache of dreams
unrealized and my forehead thick with
a strange desperation, one that comes like
a thin foam over the eyes to dull
the colours of everything clean and beautiful.
I felt the ache in my spine as though a roach
had attached itself there, slowly maneuvering its way
to my brain cells. The green shutters were closed.
The past fell at my feet like a bag of hungry
worms. I held on but knew myself almost
lost in the furrows of this mangled belief.
I peeled the paint and held my breath inside
a dark intensity. I blamed the outside
then found my basket empty.

Transition

Dry and dirty
the heart's weather sings
of a storm.
On shore, you are my faith,
housing the unfalse yet familiar.
These days we are rooted under water
without pigment, unsure, unfocused
and entering a strange plateau.
Clouds come in, but the miracle reigns.
A threshold to bind and change us.
All these things hurling us towards the light
like one love lost and another love new found,
like a heaviness that is hard
though we know it is grace.
This too, we will shoulder together.
This too, we will add to our language
and place on our windowsill.

All Things

A long road I carried
then the light vanished
and I broke free, off the cliff
into this space of holding faith
with nothingness all around.

There is no world of karma and ruthless laws,
no dense shadow tugging under my underclothes,
driving me into anguish and poverty and life-taking chores.
There is only this destiny to claim
that has asked me for its hand since the beginning.

I Was Living

**I was living out of the fold,
floating like a dead fish over the waves.
I was waiting for the phone call
that would change the colour of my house,
change the way I held my pen
and the amount of shade in every room.
I was listening to the slow click of the furnace,
listening for a voice behind the shower curtain,
for a resolving answer before midnight.
I was unhappy about my choices,
about the burnt shutters and the so-little-left
for my art.
I was there. I have yet to recover.
I am fumbling in the emergency room.
I hear it is time. I hear the trees talking
while I sleep.**

Turnstile

Plain as the impersonal sun,
the burden breaks the space
between my neck and shoulders,
halts the cool breeze and places
at my feet a nest of highly intelligent ants.
I am not walking, but standing on one foot
and I have been here for so long. I am not saying
I have not felt the love, the gifts, the undeniable
kindness of others, but my blood has thickened
and runs like lava beneath my summer's dress.
One expression stapled to a frame to the wall.
I look, I see, but still I cannot change its meaning.
If I am caught in a slumber I cannot behold . . .
If I am not free of the fear that clips
me to this intolerable edge . . .
then let the wind rip the skin from my skull and expose
the larvae festering beneath - let me see so the weight
will lighten for good and the pain that's lodged in my throat
will loosen and go the way of dead misfortune.
I only want to know a new way of surviving, of riding
the pattern of my stars.

Longest Day

So bends the tale
of the longest day.
The ghost under my flesh
twists the promise put on paper
that was bound to help my hunger.
The day drips like stale milk onto
a dry tongue. The word came.
The word was drilled as though it were a crooked
bench - torn apart to turn into something
different. Morning ended. It is good to unveil
the enemy, but waking is always a crushed seashell
once picked as a child, and nothing is that simple.
Diving, piercing the fourth layer of water. Landing nowhere
without sustenance or surplus. The thief inside
wishes to loosen itself from the sharp edges of morality.
My hearing tries to stay shut from the sounds.
The day is a giant stumbling through a
playground. Is it this I need?
Another eyelid to open, to open and to close?

I Dreamt

**I dreamt that you guided me
across the barren roads,
up steep stairways
and into the rooms of a kind stranger.
I dreamt I killed the Buddha,
that I fell headfirst into a blue flame fire
and felt no features of hopeless defeat.
I dreamt you were covered by
half a shroud, waking with a picture
of God in your hands.
I dreamt we were thrown together, flailing
our limbs until we entwined before the grave,
before the growing old.
I dreamt we kissed. And praise and guilt
were devoured by our sensual labour.
We found a doorway near that natural ocean.
We were crushed then cured by the heavy tide.
I dreamt you loved me as you do just now -
there was no loneliness, no voice withheld
and no place of shame.**

Teacher

Your days were lived
scaling rooftops then
plunging into the thick, consuming
atmosphere of guilt, humiliation
and child-like extremes of love.
Your years were frantic like
under the current of an undecided wind,
yet focused in their steady intensity,
hopeful in their reliance on God and the visions
that bent you backwards and left no pretense in tact.
Your light was prophetic, almost too
much for the human mind to bear.
You gave to the beggars, never forgetting
the cold weight of ten years in chains.
Your wife was the balm for your difficult
passions, the one who held you when all was spent
and you writhed on the floor, at her feet, foaming at the
mouth like a beaten horse.
Your gift was unmatched by others who grew
beside you in vanity and glory.
Your gift was once my lifeline, remains with me
like something kindred, always
a stepping stone.

Tangled by the Slow Fire

I fell then ran
from murder to counterspin,
leaving praise in the mudslide
and my breathing-in, rich with toxins.
I spiraled into the crematorium
weighed down by other burning corpses.
I could not hold. I cannot crawl out -
this nylon weave, this room of pestilence
and out-dated cough syrup. No nurse is near,
no toll-free joy up ahead.
Can there be another roof to leap from,
another danger to combat and empty my grainbags for?
The cell, the sand, the year without shade -
It all happens without the moon. This floor can't
carry my weight. It all happened without a final hour.
The hand has gone with the hangnail.
Guilt is my terror and the emptiness of the tide.

Slice the pony

in the pocket -
a child's gift that ran the gamut.
And now we are onto more elaborate toys,
finding meaning in the pebbles left on the road
and finding hope inside a risk. Because of so many things
lost and remade, I have been left without a plan
but to lean without shame or resistance on
the bosom of God. That is the role, the flesh
and backbone combined. There is only this place
and this time and then - death, like a miracle
in the fishtank of existence. Death like sunshine
in the lonely eye. Death like the taste of a red pepper.
Because I know it is all for you and all is given
by you - we sing, we paint our stories - this story
rich with surprises and laden with disappointments.
I sing and paint and wish for other things,
though I am satisfied with love and with the way
you see fit to carry me across.

Jesus in the Counter-Stream

The grip was lost,
chocolate was made
and the makers were magic.
For this I bled
then opened my heart
to a difficult wonder.
It has been worth
a pile-up on the road,
no rubber under the foot
and a year of hard breathing.
With this I have come to understand myself
and place my hope outside the framework of
normal time.
In the closet
in the here-and-after
mercy is the lipstick,
the colour of the camera.
What is lost is lost and all that was lost was remade
when he was found.

On The Line

The reins are dropped,
icicles shift from roof to ground
though the colour does not shift
sure as I was, it would.
The broken glass is still in my pocket,
the cramp has not left my thighs
as I push for renewal.
The light is still dull, ants raid the
kitchen and pepper spills too much into each
good meal.
I gave it all for a sense of movement, willing
to lose what I still have not lost.
My understanding is stuck.
What I believed has not come to pass.
I am wearing the same old clothes.
I am dealing with the same message.
The carpet is curled.
I have no place to go.
What I did has not helped.
Such a long-standing ache as this
must be overthrown or become part of
my means of restitution.

They lie down

as

**children would below the blankets
on a cold, unheated night.**

**They fend for themselves, using the vocabulary
of prophets, the tears of the misplaced
and the belief in mercy.**

**They stand tall at an impasse,
draw pictures in the wind
and covet love as the only treasure.**

They give light in a torrent of darkness and pressure.

**They reach new plateaus of surrender
with each failed plan. And all the time
they are singing,**

**of sadness
of wantonness
of the joy of being loved
by God.**

End

I see the darkness fully. I face the sword
to slice clean the cancer blotting my soul.
I dive in the sewer, side by side with bacteria,
holding my face straight up. I let my fingertips be
severed so I can free the rest of my body.
I am frightened, looking beyond
the murky fear into a faith, small but glowing.
I have been the caterpillar. Not for one more day.

To get through it, I am going through it -

smeared like a bird by an oil-spill,
cut off from the sky.

A Place For You

**It's nice to have a place for you
among our tatteredwares.**

**It's good to hold onto what little light
breaks in unawares.**

**One time I was traveling through
nameless streets and unclaimed yards
aching with solitude. But that was when
life was spent on temporary truths.**

The weather is good, whichever way I turn.

**My mind is sure of only love and love only
brings on this weight.**

Doubts move like maggots after the final blow.

**Although doubts feed on a solid faith, they also cause
such a faith to grow.**

**It's nice to be here half asleep watching
the grey outside.**

**One day soon our eyes will meet
and I will recognize your face
like a perfect lullaby.**

This Time Over

**The windows will close no more.
Rolled over, facing the last whisper
of divorce and desperation.
Because of forgiveness and the out-stretched
anchor offered in my days, every day,
I have been set free
like a piece of driftwood dislodged
from the river's bank, in motion.**

No Hope – For Good

Understand, I was pleading
like Job under the wire
for the arrival of hope.
But now I see that hope is murder to the seed
of this emerging beginning.
It is not a butterfly shred in a child's hands
but the cause of dark inertia,
giving despair a little more fuel to run with,
preventing the final collapse, stopping the black hole
that will suck the last trickle of false expectations through,
keeping me pinned to this stalled, starved and stale
universe like a crushed insect clinging for breath.
It is hope but also torture that takes death away
from that which needs to die.
It is hope but not enough to build on,
so it is better that it never comes, never runs
along side this something spectacular that is trying
to break through.

Release

Finally it has come,
engulfing my thighs
and the ends of my toes.
Finally the answer glides
through my hair like the wind,
freeing me again on four sides.
There is no trick, no easy way to ride
unscathed through this bloodthirsty town.
I have discovered the way is to lean into
the invisible breath of divinity like a child does
into its mother's solid arms.
Finally there is a warm shade in my soup -
the nutrient to make my panicked heart mute.
It is the channel I have been waiting for,
the doctor's slip to erase
all future obligations.

The Making of Dreams

Landing lucky
this side of the threshold.
Nobody sees me. I see
what other eyes cannot. But
that is easy. It is not easy
to dilute my passion for the
distractions of duty. To hold
up the mirror and find a look
I've never known before.
Under the carpet the days collect
and erect a year of hardship and somehow,
remarkable glory. I know this is where
I am supposed to be. I know the price
and the food. Lights on. Lights off. Balance
is never the goal.

Days Before Birth

Thrill and feel the last days approaching
before the great change.
It is sliding down a ladder
into the full of the noon-day sun,
quickenning the blood and bringing night dreams
into the open.

Under flesh and sinews
dragons burn,
making way for the new creation. Taboos
are swallowed by mud puddles
pock marking streets, and safety is a far-fetched
dream.

Imagine and hold
these last days of gold
that will bring forth a brighter, more endurable metal.

Let the heart be at ease,
for life will learn to breathe
a shade undiscovered.

Learning Temperance

Cradle the handle under the sleeve
and watch as the sun changes shadows.
Blue. I wait in the private everafter with
the future under my fingernails and an orange seed
in my throat.

Will it happen or will it always be 'the wait'?
Waiting in the moment just before bloom
but never arriving into full colour? Or is it only
a long pause, gathering breath for the final
swing that will bury all dullness that has gone before?
I see two doors and neither of them are open.
I see a tree I have walked by many times before. This time
I noticed it and smiled.
Maybe this is not darkness at all,
but a line to follow and focus on
like a child watching rain drops - one at a time.

Four Sides

Four sides to the silence
that ribbons my throne.

Four thieves that pry open
my secrets as night blends
with day.

One that skates my terrain, slicing and cutting
and so very cold.

One whose mouth stretches wide,
consuming my minstrel's tale.

Another who tugs and slows my voice rejoicing.

A fourth who digs my sex out of my thighs
and beds me a eunuch.

But for those quad-curses are four more
fierce lights that shade all grieving with tenderness
and meaning. Four bags from a magician's dream,
orbed in wonder and the waters that go on forever.

I will not complain or caress my cancer to break
apart my prize.

I will just say my tune is told, and today
my bones hurt but the food
is plenty.

It Happened

It happened when
the air grew thick
as toffee candy
and love slipped into the cupboard
behind a rack full of old clothes.
That is when the lights broke and a new view
came headlong in - one that feels like
holding hands out, spread and still
under placid waters or like
a photo charged with self-contained life.
That is when I stopped speaking about
the same large dream. That was the day I walked up
the stairs and accepted the marks across the wall, dents
in the doors and my aging fingernails.
It happened then like a quote upon my door, read and
re-read at each failing moment.
It happened and has not stopped -
less words now
less of everything and less of the burden
of its heavy worth.

Little boy born

before sunset
your head a perfect dream,
your hair so soft and gold -
I make my amends at your stroller side
for pain before endured.
I kiss away the darkness that came without solace
and press your small body near.
Little boy of mine
good fortune comes
hard won and not without trial.
Love is everlasting, but never free
of the hardships that make a person appreciate
love
in the full of its glory.
Little child I adore
the smell of your skin
and the movement of your eyes.
I will do my best by you
and God willing, my best
I will not be denied.

Dad, I think of you

You fade like a painting in
the sun. After five years,
I remember your voice, the weight
of your walk and the beauty of your proud, kind eyes.
But I cannot fit you in.
I cannot imagine your place with my children or your
responses to my teacup dry
of those other talked-about accomplishments.
I cannot place my load onto your brave and loving mind,
nor need I prove to you my passion
and the quality of my drive.
It is all under water, unfortold, vacant
of those clung-to prophecies.
It is like a draft by a door that can no longer be controlled.
It just enters and chills but either way, it cannot be helped.
Sometimes days go by and you haven't held my thoughts,
and then I retreat, shocked, guilty, propped up before all
these ghosts. Time kills eternity like a footprint on
untouched sand. I love you, but who I am now, with you,
would have never come to stand.

Siblings

Her laughter breaks your fold,
wedding you to your primal joy.
Your extremes keep tune with her emotions,
setting them close to yours and your
canvas of sharp colours.
She has no veil. You have no hidden chamber,
just the charm of your sleepers
and your dimpled cheeks.
She loves you like kin should,
dancing for your comfort and crazed
intensity. She makes you
happy, her soft voice connected
to you like a necessary limb.
She is just a small child, and you, have not
even arrived that far, yet already
your steps are locked - each one's light clearly
helping illuminate the other's.

Turned

I turn my head
stiff with anxiety's brutality and shame.
I fill my lungs with the cold fumes
of survival and find myself
lost from the legacy of miracles on my garments,
lost from the jewels under every stone in my yard.
I turn my head
and I see again the gifts that pull me through,
every time, each time at the last minute.
So why do I suffer in doubt, blistering
with fears that never hold water? The world
teaches me it is calculating and void of mercy.
God teaches me of only mercy, of treasures
astounding and undeserved but given with the love
of a thousand parents to their only child, teaches
me not to listen to the babbling crowd so full
of good advice and my future's concerns.
God speaks of grace, with grace manifesting at each
brick corner I face. At every impossible deliverance,
I am delivered.
I release my held-back breath.
I accept your goodness like a song that has finally
developed to fruition, sunning the darkness once so coveted
in my head -
turned.

Into My Mortal

I look at the deck
where my vintage love was torn
and spoiled with smoke and hard tales,
told after sundown and music being judged
beneath a piercing sky.
Outside where my personal angel
binds her matterless arms,
a voice reels like heavy breath.

My children are autumn born,
as though humming and hewing out new
pictures to awe over and learn the endless
plateaus of heaven.
I am on all sides in a Sunday,
charged by what I do and do not do.

It would be paradise,
but often the coat rack and broken switches get in the way.

The Bane of My Hypocrisy

**Point - a head twisted backwards,
gazing with upside-down eyes
at the rainy world, a tightly woven
madness that is interrupted at the moment
of release, beauty recovered
but broken before experienced - an acorn
crushed by a car wheel - the treacherous and
oblivious - a candle looked at but never lit.
It is the time of a baby's teething, when pain drools out in
a flooding aftermath of unnameable agony.
This is the child who
has no use for the outside world. This is me curled into
a dull surrender - unsure if there is a next move,
if there will be a time when I can rid myself of the bile
filling my belly - the corporate pimps and sluts, the self-
important money-makers, the big little people,
these devil's minions who try to bury me in their fear
and their soulless security, panting at my doorstep
with their sewn-on smiles and breath
of fresh infant's blood.**

Just Believing

I will turn while in my days of darkness
and feast upon fireflies.

A new groove will capture my flight
and lift chairs from the floor.

I will be the one whose radio still sounds,
whose sandwich has been eaten
and whose telephone calls have meaning.
It is just a matter of believing in mercy
and not much more.

It is appreciating the smell of my baby's neck
and the times when reading with my child. It is
the love songs I hear every day and moments of stillness
that surround.

The brick will separate from the wall and cause
an unsteady hold. The days will turn over
and the unexpected will enter
 to bless then break
 my fall.

What Can?

Because I cannot
what I can not,
the labyrinth outside
is overwhelming. But what will come
down the slanted shingles
and tree trunks is a tomorrow
I strain to name in spite
of my heart's foreboding.
Like a first laughter
awakened in a baby's mouth or the child
who is finally old enough to be allowed freedom
to control and cope,
the way out is in,
to give nothing to fear
or the waste on the side of the road.
Because I cannot
what I can not,
I see a pinprick void and
a pile-up of perfect little vehicles.
But I can be brave,
I can pray
for things
my days can not.

Friend

Under the frame
needing - a child surging
with need for that maternal hold. I am held
by Jesus - terrible in my river, wondrous
like a colourful bird to my scared vision.
I have found a deeper attachment, a lifeline
that can have no other country - a living gift
to rescue my drowned wishes and comfort
the salted wound. I am pinned down to this divine
nourishment, my blood like the whale's blood,
like the sea lion's shifting in perfect temperature
according to the touch of sea.
I found words that caught the miracle in my hand,
that broke the rock around the gold - sheltering me,
demanding of me a devotion,
that with thoughts alone
I could never hold.

My Little Ones

They go forward
with the brightness of trust
on their backs and with laughter
that loves the other's affection
and humorous ways.

They run water through their chubby hands,
opening and closing fingers in grand delight.
They are testing the ground, days
of love and giving the whole of their intensity
to growing up.

His colour is deep blue and hers is olive
with a yellowish hue.

They grace this home and atone for the damage
of other failed dreams.

They are smiles etched on my shoestrings,
coins under the carpet, a sprinkler in
the noonday sun.

They give and they receive, rich with the substance
of these and of all spectacular worthy things.

Happy Summer Coming

Days of blessings -
my happy family,
a home to lay my pillow in,
a future to work toward
and a spectrum-wide love
that makes all the difficulties
hop the train and head for another town.
Finally a lifting that has taken so long,
an ease permeating floorboards, rising
to level with my nose.
Finally a breaking away from survival's
clamped umbilical cord and a dignity
rushing in to overwrite the hardships.
Days of being satisfied, of no-more-gasping.
Days to let the arms hang relaxed
and give thanks again
for seeing us through.

The Vision

**Everglade, a line on the wall.
The vision flares up and then it sticks -
for mercy and grace surround it as it feeds
then leaves it to chart its own road.
A baby's belly. Dried food on a shirt.
The vision knows its worth, but is chewed
to crumbs by survival's demands and by faith
that falls when it is called to risk everything.
The vision is fuelled by love as people hurry by
with hopes of security
which mean nothing at death.
I am out of the whale, into the ocean.
The fly in the corner never had its say.
The vision is God in my bloodstream.
It takes the last morsel with promises
of returning the soul completed,
blanketed in much more than antiseptic hearsay
and convention.**

Junkie

Below the bending wave,
waving like Medusa's snakes
in mid-air, frantic with
emptiness, broken by
the ruthlessness of time.
All this is like a chant,
like a sore foot in summer.
I am not waiting,
not for death nor for the
impenetrable frustration
of a starving muse.
It is in me like a carnivorous worm,
stealing my insides, throwing me against
the wall, overboard
where nothing but the alien cold
awaits. How many times
must I cry out to claim space for my own?
The thrashing of children,
the noise in even a good afternoon, the demands
of a suckling babe. Hand me the dream, but
give me no time to bathe. It is late.
The autumn winds are drawing near.

The Thing Ahead

**On the crust of a fresh fall,
a beginning that may or may-not be
around the corner.
But so I will do the wait or the talk -
I will deal with the bloody aftermath
and press my hands together.
There's not much more that can be taken -
the pipes are frozen and nothing liquid is getting through.
The maggots are worshipping the corpse again
like specks of spotted mould settling on society's throne.
I relate to the stone, and also to the sea
that thrashes against the stone and breaks it down.**

Desperation/Affirmation

**In the throat like a toothpick
energy sticks and pokes and breaks
capillaries. It is not dirt on the floor
or a week of getting through but it
has turned into a lifestyle of spiritual starvation -
not a moment to read, write, record and delve into
things that change me and hold me to this world.
I cannot do what I used to - even breadcrumbs
have dried into dust and I feel like a new creature
born from anxiety - always at the upper level, never
returning to the core. I feel buried under snow
ready to just fade and fight no more.
I crave for the lips of God.
I am torn asunder like a dried leaf
under a sharp tooth-comb. I am thirsty, still
a poet.**

The Last Stance

**The fear settles on my shoulder
like a bug on an eatable leaf.
Imploding as the sun inches across the sky
from morning to twilight. From the
nadir to zenith of all my belongings
and hopes of forgiveness - I cannot swim.
I cannot stand underwater, like this,
a person attached to a puppeteer's strings.
I hide in the cupboard. I turn on the TV
and blood leaves my veins. Countdown.
Counterclockwise the months spin,
happiness is cancelled by anxiety's throne.**

I Split

I split in years around
my tattered body.
I have no grace as I sleep
in this flame and crowd my mind
with futile wondering.
I peel my footprints from
my sidewalk journey
and land like an avalanche
over house and home.
Terror I smelled when the miracle appeared,
and pain is the terror that haunts well
past its time. I am arched
over the sandy mountain waiting on
the tide. Like water, like music - I am proud
to hold you near but I cannot love the way I hoped I could.
I am yellow and swollen with a darkness that has dulled
my lover's appetite. Soon trees will be bare.
And silence is like grief, holding me O too near.

Weather

Walls shake
under the pressure of an ongoing storm.
The storm exhausts
birds in flight and flings
squirrels to the ground.
The ground is hard with ice
and the lost promise of spring.
Spring, children wait for
under the volatile sky.
The sky is tuned by the fingers of time.
Time cannot give a chance accepted or refused
but is the measure by which all things move and die.
Die, the storm is thinning like the skin of a worn drum,
leaving its signature beat on the road.
The road I base all my faith on is under my sleeve
sure of me, regardless if I turn or if I follow.

The Hand That Came

**The hand that came from
the cool water, reached
upon my deck to soothe
my extremes. The sun that
flowered green crumbled
across the twilight tide and painted
me a joy before unseen.
I watched the breaking waters
and felt it drifting over my skin like a spring-fresh leaf -
soft, majestic and full of promise.
The new seal was made, the old one broken.
It is the third birth.
A skull had fallen into my pocket and my secret
sold to dull fantasy. The waiting was cruel.
But the hand that came stripped me of my scars
and gave me an altar to place
my dying future upon.**

A Better Life

**In the beginning
I rode a burning steed,
crossed a violent river
and destroyed my home.
But now my footsteps are slower,
I never climb the rocks or chase
the landed hawk. I collect shells
for my garden and sing to the great
ocean's waves. I take my children
along the shore and show them how to dance.
I tell them my tales of long ago, though
they offer no interest or praise.
But they love me like a petal does its stem,
each reaching to me to know the effort of
my arms. We eat fruit near the underbrush
then bury each seed, tenderly,
in hot white sands.**

I forgot to remember

**the drive that brought me here,
your face and the windows you leave ajar,
the way you hold a hand to my furrowed brow.
I forgot the feel of your lean body
curled against mine, to take the garbage out and
rake the stench from our yard.**

**I forgot I am not only one, but more because of you
and our own. I was a dead bud
that with your unwavering love
discovered how to feed, remember
and finally, unfold.**

Son - almost one

**Through your eyes
of blue infant glory, fresh
as a yawning bird, I see
heavenly bodies turning
and the last of summer's flowers
appear. Fragile as the space between
the void and faith, your beautiful hands
were born to tower over the stifling air
and shed mercy on my wound.
Your perfect-shaped head is full
of milk and magic. Under your seat,
music flows and you are my light:
a third to add to the other two.
Thank you for your raw temper and
the gemstone of your dimpled smile.
What would my days be without you?
Without the air or this living dream
to behold?**

Daughter - almost five

I live inside the gentleness of your mind.
The subtlest of emotions you grasp
and give back
in soft waves of compassion and trust.
In dreams I find you
beside me for always,
a friend like no other and new
as autumn's first changing leaves.
We have been here before,
filled with joy and good madness -
your eyes rich as the colours of earth
and your rhythm, profoundly ancient
like the dance of a seabird upon water.
Your thoughts and your fast-leaning heart leans out
to the lost and the hurt. Your brush stroke,
and the paints that you choose
reminds me how blessed I am
to love, watch and guide
the unfolding presence
that is perfectly you.

Island of Wolves

The hound dogs surround
in groves of filthy packs.
I cannot say they are bleeding
but I smell their injuries wherever I go.
Their howls linger in the smog cloud
outside my bedroom window.
Who will tame their greed? It is necessary
to have an answer to this destruction - the streets,
the kitchen are in need of repairing. Around the corner,
death drips like a carnivore's favourite dream.
They are following the order of things,
full of hope but immune to all good faith.

Dark Night

Can't

stand the long drawn spike wedging
year upon year into my belly - can't
breathe under this burden of debt
and the cold didactic sentiments of the crowd - can't
live without some relief, some saving grace to upload
this struggle and haul it to the nearest dump - can't
understand the ruthless actions that forsake
the existence of God and paint a false justice on each toenail
to count and display at convenient random - can't
get my head around the hate that jettisons
into my arms because of the path
that has been laid before me - can't
help but try to hold on to the fine threads
of my sanity, to look at love and believe that is all
that matters - can't
keep this cast-iron anchor cuffed to my bones or take
another step in this downfall direction - can't
think in terms of linear hopes and
just-making-it calculations

Can't

do anything but say that I can't
then send this confession
into the wind

It is told again,

**the tale of a woman
buried by family and mountains
of laundry. Hollowed-out with
nothing to speak of, not the love she
feels when she sees her children smile
nor the fire in her lungs that longs to explode
onto the canvas of what kept her alive from
the beginning.**

**It is told again, a week of work and half-sleeping
nights - when joy is in the palm but is hard to
experience, for the poetic nutrients that keep her
mind's eye vivid is robbed of their effect. It is not
time nor eternity but the simple task of claiming what
is hers, of demanding the chance to be on all sides fulfilled.**

**It is told again,
but this time she will break the cards differently -
her chores will be abandoned but her children will see
their mother as one who refuses to hurt
beyond repair, who holds herself an equal
and never releases
the grip.**

In The Day

**In the morning, cured,
claimed and finally welcoming the wind.**

**In the early afternoon,
assembling the fragments of my faith
like the bones of a bird and then giving it the key
to fly.**

**In the evening, close to dark,
hair-clipping all disheveled expectations,
pin-pointing a place to lay down, to rest and witness
the uneventful view.**

**In the night time, quietly kissing my children,
speaking of a golden tomorrow with my husband
but feeling the weight of one-more-day without.
In the bed, almost asleep, checking and re-checking
memories and failures, then unbuttoning to bathe
in the numerous blessings laid before me
this day, this year**

deep in darkness

afterall

no matter.

The Quiet That Comes

**The quiet that comes
at a fork-in-the-road, quiet
as we listen to the direction of the breeze
and hope for a voice to bellow forth at our queue,
is the quiet of waiting, the time between
pressing-play and music.**

**The quiet that haunts and never leaves
in times of action, just stays hidden like a spider
behind the bookshelf, slowly emerging
on the dark carpet for a clear view
is the quiet of awareness.**

**The quiet that consumes
like a poison steadily, in droplets
ingested or like a picture of a lost loved one
that follows from room to room, is the depths of a pit
where our future is carved on.**

**The quiet that heals after the hell
like a promise of spiritual safety,
is the quiet of peace, a gift
for where ever circumstances
lead - a show of mercy after
the acceptance of our defeat.**

Arrived

The rhythms of sleep on the bed,
heavy as a grieving eye
are found formed together
in open conversation.

We believed in the living word,
wild with inspiration. And drowning,
we still believe as we wade in these
bad feelings and a difficult disease.

There could be a swift rescue.

There could be captivity,
but the plan of God is greater
than this inept inheritance.

Constellations, I know nothing of.

But I know the countryside, and I know
a family of the deepest purity.

Because

Because of you
my heart has hatched
its most treasured nerve.

I am no longer nagged by the sulphur darkness
that carves away the surface from my lungs.

Because of you
we have two more to join us on our journey.
Two children, ruled by humour and the deep-drawn breath.
I no longer need false conversation,
struggling to understand the flow.

Because of you
my love has learned how to conjure more love,
reap then sow.

At Last, Returning

In somersaults I passed
through a field of evergreens.
I saw with sunken eyes the light
of all who were worthy to praise, and in turn,
be a part of a living relationship.
I counted my cats and blocked myself from
every shadow. Days were beautiful.
Even poverty seemed like a mission to
accept and uphold. The evergreens dried yellow
and insects burrowed into their bark.
Then the light burned and faded to cold.
A long, tortuous shedding
of falsities and natural dreams. It is good
to be naked, to be finally at ease with the way
I always have been - reincarnated
into the old.

The Flood

Glorious weather, wetting
the decks and smallest of worms.
We were made to split the light
with voices singular and clean.
We were destined to wade in
night, free of logic, partakers
of heart-wrenching dreams.
I name myself lost but loved
and that is better than any key.
I count the madness in cracks
and know the world is ready to turn.
Funerals and baby births and
a barn alive with birds, soon
clouds will come and the zodiac will
burn.

God will be full of joy
and each household will be looking
in a new direction - close-to-the-bone,
materially threadbare.

All of these poems have been published and have appeared in:

The Greensilk Journal; Beatnik; Pirene's Fountain; Studio Journal; Poetic Licence; Bursting Plethora of Rainbow Colors; Extract(s); The Write Room; Storm Cellar; Boston Poetry Magazine; Writers Haven Magazine; Jellyfish Whispers; The Seventh Quarry; Anchor & Plume; Kindred; The Blind Vigil Revue; Torrid Literature Journal: Evolution; Poetry Pacific; The Screech Owl (magazine and anthology 2014); Torrid Literature Journal: Erosion; Wilderness House Literary Review; Poetica; Our Poetry Archive, Contemporary Women's Poetry Anthology; Medusa's Kitchen; Shot Glass Journal; Peeking Cat Poetry Magazine; Chicago Record Magazine; PoetryMagazine; Dreaming Big Publications: Imaginary Conversations Lit Page; Malevolent Pegasus Literary Zine; Gossamer Poetry Page; SilverSpine Poetry Forum; Writing Raw; Birmingham Arts Journal; Nature Writing; Bare Back Magazine; Temporary Lunatic Literary Zine; October Hill Magazine; The Peregrine Muse; above/ground press; Creek Side Writing Forum; EskimoPie; Allegro; Mothers Always Write; Stone Face Literary Zine; Dark Blooms Literary Zine; Profiles in Poetry Literary Zine; Thirteen Myna Birds; Wildflower Muse; In Between Hangovers; TwitchFit Lit Writing Zine; Tangerine Heart Poetry Zine; Junk in July Poetry Zine; Outlaw Poetry; Urtica; Spirit Fire Review; Grease Monkey Literary Forum; Vine Figure Poetry Page; The Camel Saloon; Poet's Corner; Walking Is Still Honest; Beatnik; Stay Weird and Keep Writing Publishing; Antarctica Journal; Moongate Motherbird; The Bees Are Dead; The Octopus Review; Contemporary Poetry - An Anthology of Present Day Best Poems; First Literary Review-East; Crisis Chronicles Press; Gris-Gris; Iron Gall Press; Eleventh Transmission

Book Review of "Into My Mortal":

"Allison Grayhurst's poetry appears visceral, not for the faint of heart, and moves forward with a dynamism, with a frenetic pulse. If you seek the truth, the physical blood and bones, then, by all means, open the world into which we were all born," *Anne Burke*, poet, regional representative for Alberta on the League of Canadian Poets' Council, and chair of the Feminist Caucus, 2014.

About the Author



Allison Grayhurst is a member of the League of Canadian Poets. Three of her poems were nominated for “Best of the Net” in 2015, and one eight-part story-poem was nominated for “Best of the Net” in 2017. She has over 1,125 poems published in more than 450 international journals and anthologies. Her book *Somewhere Falling* was published by Beach Holme Publishers, a Porcupine Book, in Vancouver in 1995. Since then she has published fifteen other books of poetry and six collections with Edge Unlimited Publishing. Prior to the publication of *Somewhere Falling* she had a poetry book published, *Common Dream*, and four chapbooks published by The Plowman. Her poetry chapbook *The River is Blind* was published by Ottawa publisher above/ground press December 2012. In 2014 her chapbook *Surrogate Dharma* was published by Kind of a Hurricane Press, Barometric Pressures Author Series. In 2015, her book *No Raft – No Ocean* was published by Scars Publications. More recently, her book *Make the Wind* was published in 2016 by Scars Publications. As well, her book *Trial and Witness – selected poems*, was published in 2016 by Creative Talents Unleashed (CTU Publishing Group).

Collaborating with Allison Grayhurst on the lyrics, Vancouver-based singer/songwriter/musician Diane Barbarash has transformed eight of Allison Grayhurst's poems into songs, creating a full album. "River – Songs from the poetry of Allison Grayhurst" released October 2017.

Allison Grayhurst is a vegan for the animals. She lives in Toronto with her family. She also sculpts, working with clay; www.allisongrayhurst.com

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“Allison Grayhurst’s poetry combines the depth and dark intensity of Sylvia Plath, the layered complex imagery of Dylan Thomas and the philosophical insights of Soren Kierkegaard, taking the reader on a fearless journey through the human condition, delving with honesty into death, grief, loss, faith, commitment, motherhood, and erotic love. Grayhurst intertwines a potent spirituality throughout her work so that each poem is not simply a statement or observation, but a revelation that demands the reader’s personal involvement. Grayhurst’s poetic genius is profound and evident. Her voice is uniquely authentic, undeniable in its dignified vulnerability as it is in its significance,” Kyp Harness, singer/songwriter, cartoonist, author of Wigford Rememberies, Nightwood Editons; www.kypharness.net

“Allison Grayhurst is the Queen of Catharsis. Her poems are like cathedrals witnessing and articulating in unflinching graphic detail the gritty angst and grief of life, while taking it to rare clarity, calm and comfort in an otherwise confusing world of deception, mediocrity and degradation. Allison Grayhurst takes the sludge of life, and with fearless sharpness of eye and heart she spins it free of maggots with the depth of honour and passion. Allison Grayhurst's work is haunting, majestic and cleansing, often leaving one breathless in the wake of its intelligence, hope, faith and love amidst the muck of life. Many of Allison Grayhurst's poems are simply masterpieces booming with thunderous insight begging to be in Bartlett's Quotations, lines such as "I drink necessity's authority." Nothing is wishy-washy in the realm of Allison Grayhurst. Allison Grayhurst's work is sustaining, enriching, and deepening for the soul to read... a light of sanity in the world. As a poet, Allison Grayhurst is a lighthouse of intelligent honour... indeed, intelligence rips through her work like white water,” Taylor Jane Green, BA, RIHR, CHT, Registered Spiritual Psychotherapist and author of *Swan Wheeler: A North American Mythology* and *The Rise of Eros*.

"Her poems read like the journal entries of a mystic – perhaps that what they are. They are abstract and vivid, like a dreamy manifestation of soul. This is the best way, in prose, one can describe the music which is ... the poetry of Allison Grayhurst," *Blaise Wigglesworth*, *Oh! Magazine: Ryerson's Arts and Culture Voice*.

"Grayhurst's poetry is a translucent, ethereal dream in which words push through the fog, always searching, struggling, and reaching for the powerful soul at its heart. Her work is vibrant and shockingly original," *Beach Holme Publishers*.

"Allison Grayhurst's poetry appears visceral, not for the faint of heart, and moves forward with a dynamism, with a frenetic pulse. If you seek the truth, the physical blood and bones, then, by all means, open the world into which we were all born," *Anne Burke*, poet, regional representative for Alberta on the League of Canadian Poets' Council, and chair of the Feminist Caucus.

"Read at your peril. You will never look at this world in quite the same way again. Your eye will instinctively search the sky for eagles and scan the dark earth for the slightest movement of smallest ant, your heart will reach for tall mountains, bathe in the most intimate of passions and in the grain and grit of our earth. Such is Allison Grayhurst. Such is her poetry," *Eric M. Vogt*, poet and author.

"Grayhurst is a great Canadian poet. All of Allison Grayhurst's poetry is original, sometimes startling, and more often than not, powerful. Anyone who loves modern poetry that does not follow the common path will find Grayhurst complex, insightful, and as good a poet as anyone writing in the world today. Grayhurst's poetry volumes are highly, highly recommended," *Tom Davis*, poet, novelist and educator.

“When I read Allison Grayhurst's poetry, I am compelled by the intensity and strength of her spirituality. Her personal experience of God drives her poetry. With honesty and vulnerability, she fleshes out the profound mystery of knowing at once both the beauty and terror of God's love, both freedom and obedience, deep joy and sorrow, both being deeply rooted in but also apart from the world, and lastly, both life and death. Her poems undulate through these paradoxes with much feeling and often leave me breathless, shaken. Allison Grayhurst's poems are both beautiful and difficult to behold,” *Anna Mark*, poet and teacher.

“Allison Grayhurst’s poetry has a tribal and timeless feeling, reminiscent of the Biblical commentary in Ecclesiastes,” *Cristina Deptula*, editor of *Synchronized Chaos*.

WHAT OTHERS SAY ABOUT THE POETRY OF ALLISON GRAYHURST

"WHEN I READ ALLISON GRAYHURST'S POETRY, I AM COMPELLED BY THE INTENSITY AND STRENGTH OF HER SPIRITUALITY. HER PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF GOD DRIVES HER POETRY. WITH HONESTY AND VULNERABILITY, SHE FLESHES OUT THE PROFOUND MYSTERY OF KNOWING AT ONCE BOTH THE BEAUTY AND TERROR OF GOD'S LOVE, BOTH FREEDOM AND OBEDIENCE, DEEP JOY AND SORROW, BOTH BEING DEEPLY ROOTED IN BUT ALSO APART FROM THE WORLD, AND LASTLY, BOTH LIFE AND DEATH. HER POEMS UNDULATE THROUGH THESE PARADOXES WITH MUCH FEELING AND OFTEN LEAVE ME BREATHLESS, SHAKEN. ALLISON GRAYHURST'S POEMS ARE BOTH BEAUTIFUL AND DIFFICULT TO BEHOLD." ANNA MARK, POET AND TEACHER.

"A RIVER IS IN ALLISON GRAYHURST'S POEMS. SOMETIMES IT RAGES OVER BOULDERS HIDDEN BENEATH RAPIDS. SOMETIMES IT IS AS CALM AND PLACID AS A SUMMER DAY REFLECTING SKIES SO BLUE THEY ARE AS UNUSUAL AS A STELLAR JAY'S WINGS. SOMETIMES IT IS AS UNPREDICTABLE AS THE RHYTHM OF CLOUDS GATHERING BEFORE A STORM. MADE UP OF WORDS, EMOTIONS, THOUGHTS, THOUGHTS CRYSTALLIZED INTO IDEAS, THIS RIVER, LIKE MOST RIVERS, IS UNFORGETTABLE. ONE POEM CASCADES AFTER ANOTHER INTO A FLOOD OF POETRY. AS IN THE POETRY OF WALLACE STEVENS, ALLISON GRAYHURST'S WORK CAN BE DENSE WITH MEANINGS HIDDEN BENEATH THE FLOWING SURFACE OF WORDS. THE EMOTIONS IN HER POEMS SEAR WITH THE POWER OF SYLVIA PLATH. ONE LAYER REFLECTS LIGHT OVER ANOTHER LAYER OF THOUGHT AND EMOTION THAT LEADS TO YET ANOTHER LAYER. THIS IS AS SERIOUS A POET AS IS WRITING POETRY TODAY. FOR THOSE ADVENTUROUS ENOUGH TO VENTURE INTO A RIVER WILD, DEEP, CALM, BEAUTIFUL, SHADOWED, LIGHT, FILLED WITH MOODS AND EMOTIONS OF BOTH AN INNER AND THE EARTH'S LANDSCAPE, THEN THIS IS A JOURNEY WORTH TAKING. IT LEADS TO EXPERIENCES THAT HAVE THE TEXTURE AND SUBSTANCE OF LIFE," THOMAS DAVIS, POET, EDUCATOR, SCHOLAR, PLAYWRIGHT, AND NOVELIST.



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